



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 118th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 169

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2023

No. 16

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Sovereign Lord, we trust You to guide our Nation and world. Permit us to feel Your nearness and to know the inspiration of Your presence. May our closeness to you help us to choose truth over falsehood, love over hate, and good over evil.

Lord, move among our lawmakers, instructing, lifting, and guiding them so that whatever they do in word or deed they will glorify You. Show our Senators what needs to be done and give them the courage and wisdom to do Your will.

We pray in Your glorious Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WELCH). The Republican leader is recognized.

UKRAINE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, here on the floor yesterday, I called on America's European allies, including Germany, to do more to equip Ukraine with long-requested tanks, not just to resist Russian aggression but to defeat it.

I have consistently called on the Biden administration to be more proactive and to lead by example in delivering lethal aid, like the long-range weapons, with a greater sense of urgency.

I was happy to learn yesterday and this morning that, indeed, both the White House and their counterparts in Germany are finally moving forward with these overdue steps.

Germany has announced it will supply Ukraine with an initial 14 Leopard 2 tanks, and the Biden administration is expected to send at least 30 M1 Abrams tanks as well. Good news.

Now that Berlin has taken this step, I hope and expect that Germany and other European countries with tanks in their inventory will move expeditiously to send them to Ukraine.

Modern main battle tanks will provide highly maneuverable armored firepower that will help Ukraine liberate territory and keep pressure on the Russian aggressors, but, as I have said repeatedly, time is of the essence.

Of course, as we rush these long-overdue capabilities to Ukraine, the West's work is far from over. These drawdowns of Western arsenals must also prompt serious work to expand the capacity of our defense industrial base. The Biden administration's efforts on this front are overdue but important, and I hope more of our allies will follow through by moving quickly to put

critical munitions and weapons systems under contract and expanding each of their industrial capacities.

CRIME

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, here are just a few scenes from across our country in the last few weeks.

Thirty people were shot in Chicago this past weekend alone. That is up from 21 the weekend before.

In Philadelphia, police are investigating a carjacking spree that is reportedly being carried out by armed juveniles:

They put a gun to my head and they took the van. [And] I haven't found it back again.

Out in San Francisco, just one neighborhood has seen a beating, an attempted robbery, a 2-year-old suffering fentanyl poisoning after playing in the park, and 17 car windows smashed—all on one street, all on one night.

Streets, neighborhoods, and cities across our country are being swamped—literally, swamped—by a level of crime that is unsafe, uncivilized, and totally unacceptable.

My hometown of Louisville, KY, saw 10 homicides in just the first 10 days of 2023, and already 5 more since then—the latest additions to the list of 500-plus homicides we have seen since the start of this violent crime wave 3 years ago.

As Louisville's mayor said a few weeks ago, "these are not just numbers; these are people."

Many of the individuals our city lost were young, just starting out their careers and families. Far too many were children, including a 14-year-old boy we lost just 10 days ago.

Of course, for every victim who lost their life to violent crime, there are even more who have been injured or traumatized or literally forced to live in fear. As one resident said, "I got to lock my doors all the time . . . I'm worried about my children going outside. It's not fair."

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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It is not fair. Of course, he is absolutely right. It is not fair that once-safe neighborhoods have become war zones. It is not fair that children are being murdered.

Or look at what is happening right here in the Nation's Capital. Right here in Washington, law and order have been in a free fall. Over the weekend, in broad daylight, a rideshare driver had his car stolen by a group of men brandishing rifles. City-wide, Washington is averaging a carjacking every day. Homicides this year are up 17 percent. Just yesterday, two 18-year-olds, fresh off a carjacking spree in a nearby county, came right here to the capital, ran into two separate Capitol Police vehicles, and then tried to flee on foot. Fortunately, the Capitol Police brought them into custody.

Yet the DC City Council is so completely captured by the woke far-left, they have responded to the crime wave with a new criminal code that—listen to this—reduces penalties even further. That is the response of the DC City Council.

Just last week, the council overrode the mayor's veto and pushed through a measure that shreds—shreds—the maximum punishment for gun crimes. It eliminates almost all mandatory minimum sentences. It will clog up the court system with massive expansions of new jury trials for misdemeanors.

Well, the good news on this front is that the U.S. Congress gets to have the final word over reckless local policies from the DC government. Senate Republicans will have a lot more to say on this subject. Stay tuned.

The American people know crime is getting worse, and they know it hasn't happened by accident. From Los Angeles to Philadelphia, to Chicago, the Democratic Party has backed radical district attorneys who have tried to unilaterally take parts of the local criminal code offline. They simply decline to prosecute serious crimes, from drug possession to criminal threats, as a matter of principle. In some cases these woke prosecutors are seeking early release for felons convicted of violent crimes.

Many other Democrats have spent years fanning the dangerous flames of the far-left's antipolice rhetoric. Of course, studies have proven that public hostility to police leads directly to more crime, including more homicides, in the at-risk communities that need law and order the most.

Furthermore, the Biden administration and Senate Democrats have spent 2 years working to stack the Federal judiciary with former public defenders and others whose sympathies lie more with criminal defendants than with innocent victims.

Nobody is arguing that criminal defenders should never become judges, but this has been a dramatic, deliberate transformation project that is skewed overwhelmingly in one direction. Even the New York Times has admitted it has been "a sea change in the world of traditional nominations."

The Biden administration never misses an opportunity to make crime even worse. Deaths from cocaine have quintupled over the past decade, but, just a few weeks ago, this President and his Attorney General took the radical and borderline lawless step of unilaterally reducing the penalties for dealing crack.

These liberals respond to soaring overdose fatalities by going even softer on drugs.

Democrats are struggling with the basics. Actually, this shouldn't be that hard. Drugs belong off the streets. Career criminals belong behind bars, and far-left politicians who put innocent citizens last belong far away from the levers of power.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, before I get into my remarks, there is just some floor business.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 23, H.R. 26, S.J. RES. 4, H.R. 22

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I understand there are four measures at the desk that are due for a second reading en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The leader is correct.

The clerk will read the bills by title for the second time en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 23) to rescind certain balances made available to the Internal Revenue Service.

A bill (H.R. 26) to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit a health care practitioner from failing to exercise the proper degree of care in the case of a child who survives an abortion or attempted abortion.

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 4) removing the deadline for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

A bill (H.R. 22) to prohibit the Secretary of Energy from sending petroleum products from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to China, and for other purposes.

Mr. SCHUMER. In order to place the measures on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to their further proceeding en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the measures will be placed on the calendar.

WELCOMING PETER WELCH

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, I believe this is the first time our new

Senator from Vermont is sitting in the Chair.

Congratulations. There will be many more opportunities just like this.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, as the debate over raising the debt ceiling continues, Leader MCCONNELL said something yesterday that, I think, is right on the mark. He said that when it comes to moving a debt ceiling proposal through Congress, the House should go first. He is correct. Not only should the House go first, but they must quickly show the American people what their plan actually is for avoiding a first-ever default on the national debt. So far, we haven't heard anything beyond vague and troubling talking points about the need to cut Federal spending. That is not going to fly when you are in the majority, as Speaker MCCARTHY, of course, is. The substance and details make all the difference. The debt ceiling is not some political game, and Speaker MCCARTHY has an obligation to level with the American people on what precisely the new House plans to do in order to avoid a default.

President Biden and the Speaker have reportedly agreed to sit down in the near future on this topic, and the Speaker is apparently heralding this development as some sort of big win or concession. But look, Speaker MCCARTHY sitting down without a clear plan is no win. Sitting down to talk about the debt ceiling without a plan is like coming to the table with no cards. President Biden, meanwhile, has a plan. He has cards. He has been clear that there must be no brinksmanship and no default on the debt ceiling.

Speaker MCCARTHY, what about you? The House GOP is threatening spending cuts. Well, what are they? why the evasion? Why is your conference hiding from the American people?

House Republicans, where are your cards?

Again, I want to be clear that the debt ceiling is a subject of the highest consequence, and using it as a bargaining chip—using it as brinksmanship, as hostage-taking—as Republicans are trying to do, is exceedingly dangerous because if the House of Representatives continues on their current course and allows the United States to default on its debt obligations, every single American is going to pay a terrible and expensive price.

The consequences of default are not some theoretical abstraction. If default happens, Americans will see the consequences in their daily lives. Interest rates will go soaring on everything from credit cards and student loans to cars, mortgages, and more. That is thousands of dollars for each American going right out the door. That will happen and through no fault of their own.

Retirement plans, like 401(k)s, would lose their value, robbing people of their hard-earned livelihoods. For millions